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ABSTRACT

This document explains how employers can participate in creating a new workforce investment system that is market driven, comprehensive, portable, accountable, customer focused, responsive, flexible, and customized. The guide details immediate and future steps employers can take at the state and local levels to influence the process of creating a new workforce investment system, ensure that workforce investment initiatives respond to their individual workplace needs, and help align education and training to workplace standards. Employers are advised to work on/with business-led, business-majority boards to accomplish the following tasks: (1) set local workforce policy; (2) work with local officials to ensure that training meets business and labor market needs; (3) develop plans for local workforce investment systems; (4) identify training service providers and require that they meet industry standards; (5) designate, certify, and oversee one-stop service operators; (6) set local performance measures; (7) establish systems for gathering and publicizing local employment statistics; (8) supply information on labor market needs through one-stop service systems; (9) build links among workforce and economic development and related activities; (10) establish youth councils to make youth service recommendations; (11) create measures of customer satisfaction; (12) assess local workforce systems' effectiveness; and (13) make decisions and provide information and advice. (MN)

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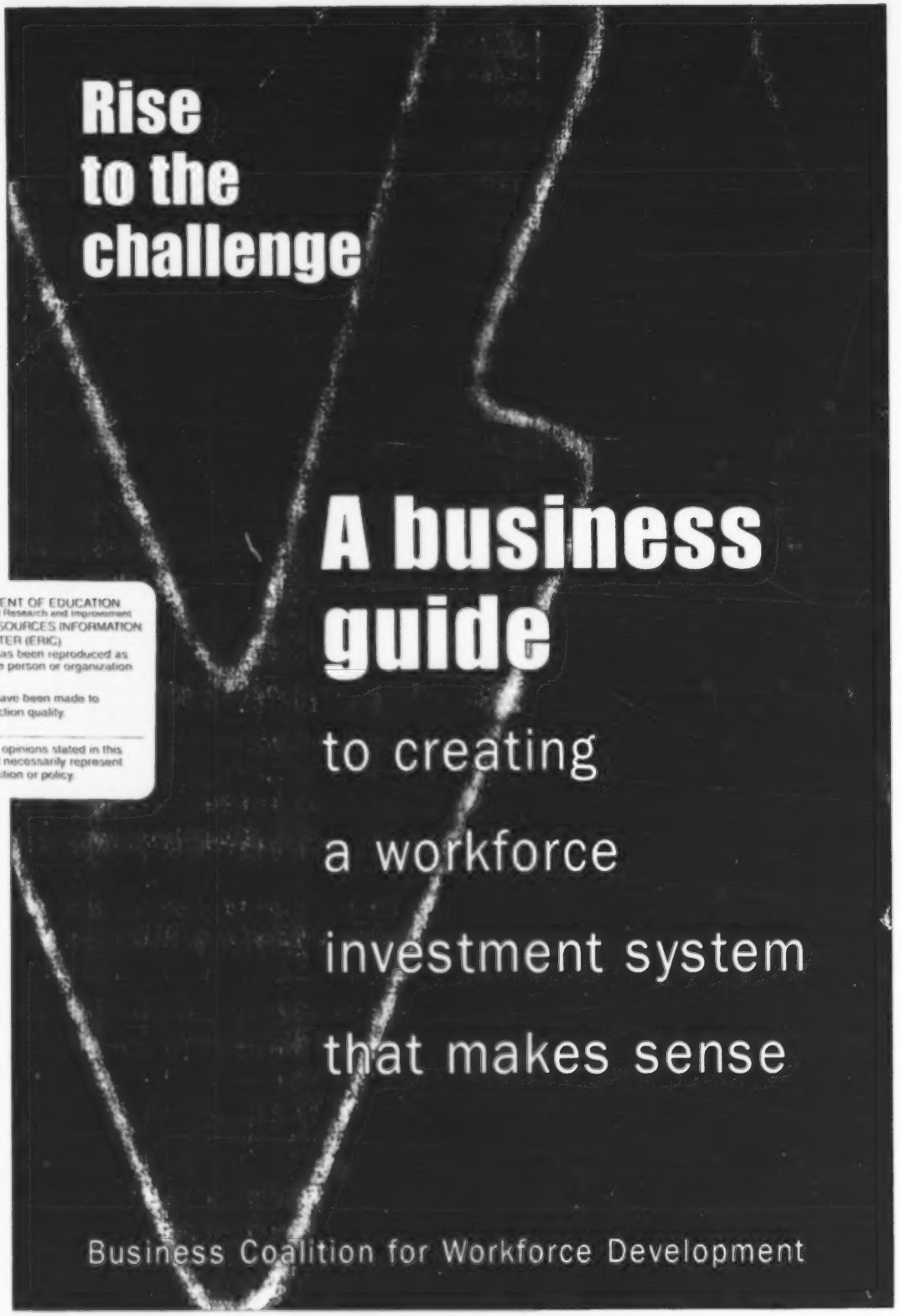

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- What needs to happen now?
- How can employers keep the momentum going in the future?

An uncommon **opportunity**

In 2000 and beyond, you and other employers across the country will have an uncommon opportunity to structure bold new ways of training and educating millions of Americans. Given today's dynamic workplaces, where skill demands are increasing rapidly and qualified workers are hard to find, the timing couldn't be better.

With your vision and leadership, states and communities will begin rolling out a new system of workforce investment -- a transformation that fundamentally repositions federal job training as a business-led, market-driven system to improve workforce quality.

The Business Coalition for Workforce Development, a group of more than 35 business organizations representing employers nationwide, worked for more than five years to craft this new system.

The Workforce Investment Act, adopted by the U.S. Congress in 1998, gives business the chance to transform a fragmented assortment of programs into a comprehensive, aligned and universal system. It's a victory for employers large and small — but it's up to employers and business organizations to make this system work in their own states and communities.

Nothing will change without your vision and leadership: It all hinges on your active involvement. You can make a difference — and you can't afford to stay on the sidelines if you care about the business of work.

This is your moment: **Rise to the challenge**

The Workforce Investment Act empowers you to take action and build a system styled the way you want it. Now, it's time for you to seize the opportunity and do what you do best: Roll up your sleeves, imagine the possibilities and make good things happen. Indeed, there is a huge incentive for doing so; states and communities have more flexibility than ever in spending billions of dollars in federal education and training funds.

This is a tremendous opportunity to take a fresh look at developing human talent — and to ask the "What if?" questions that will point your state and region in promising new directions. By doing so, you can help your company, your workers and your community.

This leadership guide will help you do that. Here, you'll find out how:

- ➔ You can influence the process.
- ➔ You can make sure workforce investment initiatives respond to your workplace needs.
- ➔ You can help align education and training to your workplace standards.
- ➔ You can work with state and local government leaders in implementing workforce investment systems — now and in the months ahead.

What is it we're creating?
A market-driven system

The new workforce investment system is business-led and market-driven — so it is more valuable to use. Employers and industry groups, many organized into regional clusters, determine the skills needed in today's — and tomorrow's — workplaces. Employers and workers alike will find that education and training are more relevant to actual workplace needs.

As an employer, you'll value the entrepreneurial spirit of the new system. It simplifies the maze of hundreds of current programs into a comprehensive, aligned system of services — and you are the prime customer. With your input, states and communities can design a system that operates more like a business.

A system as responsive and **entrepreneurial as business**

The centerpiece of the new workforce investment system is the one-stop service system. States and communities are bringing together their job training and workforce investment efforts under one "roof" or hub that's convenient to employers and workers.

These meeting places can be physical buildings or electronic networks — or, more likely, both. At one-stop centers, employers can find new workers and gain opportunities to help incumbent workers upgrade skills; workers can access education, training and related services, such as career counseling, transportation and child care; and job candidates can assess and improve their skills.

With one-stop centers, the public workforce investment system is easier and more convenient than ever for employers and workers to use.

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Key characteristics of the **new workforce**

Market-driven Business needs matter most. Employers decide the skills they need in their workplaces. Employer-led workforce boards establish industry standards for training, choose the best trainers and hold the system accountable for meeting performance standards.

Comprehensive All services are located in one place. One-stop service centers consolidate most federal, state and local workforce programs and services into convenient physical locations and electronic sites. Employers and workers can connect in real or virtual service networks to find out about job openings and forecasts, the people with the skills to do these jobs, and the best education and training services.

Portable Funds are tied to results. Job candidates can use training vouchers to select the best, industry-recognized training or education programs. Participants can use their vouchers to seek education and training providers with proven results.

Accountable Performance results are public. Employers, workers and job candidates alike know what works — and what doesn't. Job placement and retention rates, employees' earnings gains, and skill certifications that meet industry standards, for example, indicate results. Training providers that don't pass muster will be sanctioned or dropped.

Customer-focused Employer satisfaction counts. Employer-led workforce boards measure employer satisfaction with the quality, relevance and responsiveness of services. Training and education providers know that their job is to meet business expectations in serving individual workers.

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investment system

Responsive The new system is designed for continuous improvement. Built-in performance and customer satisfaction measures provide data that employer-led workforce boards can use to make improvements.

Flexible A demand-driven system makes quick changes possible. Local workforce boards can tailor services to meet each community's unique skill needs. Waivers can remove bureaucratic barriers, enabling one-stop service systems to move quickly in a rapidly changing environment.

Customized Your specific business needs can be met. Customized training services such as on-the-job, industry-specific and school-to-career training are available to businesses of all sizes. One-stop career centers can convene training providers, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and other postsecondary schools to tailor workforce solutions for your business.

Key dates

April 1, 2000
Final deadline for states to submit workforce system plans

July 2000
New workforce investment systems operating in all states

Find out what **you can do**

Every employer should be involved in making this new system work well. In the following pages, you'll learn more about what state and local officials are doing to implement workforce investment systems. And you'll learn how you can work at the state and local levels to create responsive, effective one-stop service centers that cater to your business needs.

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State governments are responsible for organizing the new workforce investment system at the state level and allocating funds to regional and local one-stop service centers.

What can you do at the state level?

- Work with the governor
- Work with state legislators
- Work with the state workforce investment board

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Work with the governor

The governor:

- Sets up the state workforce board.
- Appoints members to the state workforce board, selecting business members from nominations made by state business organizations and selecting other members from the state legislature, state agencies, community organizations, local government and other stakeholders in workforce investment.
- Designs the state system in partnership with the board.

What can employers do to help the governor now?

- **Explain business interests and workforce skill needs.**
- **Identify business leaders for membership on the state workforce board.**
- **Review and comment on the state plan from a business perspective before the plan is submitted to the federal government.**

How can employers maintain the governor's momentum in the future?

- **Define changing workplace needs to guide continuous improvements in services.**
- **Encourage alignment of economic and workforce investment strategies.**
- **Support efforts to expand employer engagement in workforce investment.**

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Work with state legislators

State legislators:

Help influence state legislation, if necessary, to provide for the establishment of a state workforce system that is responsive to workplace needs.

What can employers do to help state legislators now?

- → Communicate the vital role of business as a policymaker and as a customer of the system.
- → Give the business perspective on the need to connect human resources development and economic development to workforce investment.
- → Shape state workforce legislation to make sure employers' interests are met.

How can employers maintain state legislators' momentum in the future?

- → Define changing workplace needs to guide continuous service improvements.
- → Seek alignment of economic and workforce development strategies to keep systems responsive to workplace requirements.
- → Step up efforts to expand active employer engagement in workforce investment.

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Work with the state workforce investment board

This business-led, business-majority board, with the governor:

- → Establishes the state workforce system.
- → Sets policies for state workforce system.
- → Develops the state plan.
- → Sets criteria for the one-stop system.
- → Develops connections among people and agencies to make sure programs and services are coordinated.
- → Designates local service areas, which may include incentives for regional planning.
- → Develops measures for customer satisfaction and continuous improvement of the state workforce investment system.
- → Assesses effectiveness of the system.

What can employers do to work with the state workforce investment board now?

- → **Inform board members to make sure the new system responds to employer demands and changing workplace requirements.**
- → **Help board members set standards for training quality that meet employer expectations.**
- → **Advise board members of local labor market conditions so one-stop services are aligned with local needs.**

How can employers maintain the state workforce investment board's momentum in the future?

- → **Help board members periodically review and disclose performance results.**
- → **Urge board members to address poor performance.**
- → **Assist board members in building links between the workforce investment system and other services that provide workplace knowledge and skills, such as post-secondary schools and community organizations.**

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Local officials, in partnership with employers, initiate the new workforce investment system. At the regional and local levels, elected officials and employers can work together to tailor one-stop services to specific local needs.

What can you do at the local level?

- Work with local elected officials
- Work with local workforce investment boards
- Work with one-stop service centers

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Work with local elected officials

Local elected officials:

- → Set up the local workforce investment board that sets policy for the local workforce system.
- → Appoint members to the local workforce board, selecting business members from nominations made by local business organizations and selecting other members from the local government, agencies, community organizations and other stakeholders in workforce investment.
- → Broker regional alliances to improve workforce services.

What can employers do to help local elected officials now?

- → **Provide labor market information, including skills currently in demand in workplaces, and help local officials develop plans for one-stop services.**
- → **Nominate employers to the local workforce board and make sure that appointments are made from nominees submitted by business.**

How can employers maintain the momentum of local elected officials in the future?

- → **Sustain the visibility of workforce issues as a community priority.**
- → **Nominate employers to the local workforce board when vacancies occur.**
- → **Help to align workforce and economic development.**
- → **Provide feedback to elected officials on the effectiveness of workforce systems.**

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Work with local workforce investment boards

These business-led, business-majority boards:

- ➔ Set local workforce policy.
- ➔ With local elected officials, make sure that training meets business and labor market needs through a system of one-stop service centers and qualified service providers.
- ➔ Develop plans for local workforce investment systems.
- ➔ Identify training service providers and require that they meet industry standards.
- ➔ Designate, certify and oversee one stop service operators.
- ➔ Set local performance measures.
- ➔ Establish systems for gathering and publicizing local employment statistics.
- ➔ Supply information on labor market needs through one-stop service systems.
- ➔ Build links among workforce and economic development and related activities.
- ➔ Set up youth councils to make youth service recommendations.
- ➔ Create measures of customer satisfaction.
- ➔ Assess effectiveness of local workforce systems.
- ➔ Make decisions and provide information and advice. Administrative work is funded by federal aid to the system.

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What can employers do to work with local workforce investment boards now?

- → Identify and inform board members about job skills that are in demand.
- → Help board members plan the local workforce investment system.
- → Review and comment on the local workforce investment plan.
- → Apply to administer federal grants under a one-stop service center or advise board members on selecting the best administrator.

How can employers maintain the momentum of local workforce investment boards in the future?

- → Continue communicating with board members about the effectiveness, value, relevance and responsiveness of the system, training providers and services.
- → Serve as a liaison between the business community and board members.
- → Identify job and industry workforce skill requirements and industry trends.
- → Use one-stop services to post job openings and find employees.
- → Suggest ways that board members can connect workforce investment to economic development strategies and programs.

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Work with one-stop service centers

One-stop service centers:

- Provide a network of comprehensive services and labor market information for employers, workers and job seekers.
- Offer skill assessment; central posting of job and skill needs; access to qualified service providers that meet industry skill standards; financial aid for training; and referrals to other education, training and social services.

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What can employers do to help one-stop service centers now?

- → Make sure the centers provide central posting for employer skill requirements; all education and training providers, their capabilities and performance results; job listings; and other public services, such as child care, transportation, counseling, social services and vocational rehabilitation.
- → Define workplace needs.
- → Provide industry training standards to guide job seekers and training providers.
- → Recommend effective training providers recognized by industry.

How can employers maintain the momentum of one-stop service centers in the future?

- → Provide labor market information on skill needs and job openings, growth and hiring trends, and economic development strategies.
- → Give feedback on the quality of services, including the relevance and responsiveness to employer skill demands.
- → Design customized services, such as incumbent-worker, school-to-career, on-the-job and industry consortia training.

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To learn more — start today!

Go to the Business Coalition for Workforce Development Web site at **www.workforceinfo.net** to access detailed information about state and local contacts, workforce systems in your community, local implementation, and guiding federal policies.

This site will grow as information and best practices are available. Think of it as a clearinghouse for business information about workforce investment systems.

www.workforceinfo.net

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Career College Association
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Information Technology Training Association
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